

One final comment from one who was selected to go on:

The emotional intensity of the afternoon and the committed concentration on one's own wants makes clear rational decisions unlikely. If one wanted that then the standard autocratic approach at least has the advantage of being good or bad depending on the quality of dictator. The strength of the peer group method is that in the cauldron of tension the group selects itself by instinct, intuition and self interest. And very best of all there's no one else to blame if we don't like each other. At the present I like everyone very much, having been accepted. I'm certain my prejudices would have been elsewhere had I not made the act.

V. Peterson

John Rowan's "Next-Step-Ness" and the **Intensive Journal** Process

In his article "Psychology and Spirituality", John Rowan describes a recent time when he felt "a gnawing sense of 'next-step-ness'". He explains, "I had achieved all the things which humanistic psychology promised (but) it seemed there was still something I had to do". (1) Behind Rowan's discomfort was an intuition that it had something to do with spirituality. He finds that a comment by Malcolm Lazarus that "Psychology was one thing, spirituality is another" disturbed him to the extent that it "reverberated in his head for days afterward".

What finally relieved Rowan's discomfort was a book by Ken Wilber where he finds some ideas that resonate powerfully. Among them are:

- 1) There is just one path that we are all on (and) different branches of psychology, different spiritual disciplines deal with just one bit of it.

- 2) At each stage of development . . . the same exact process applies.
- 3) (That process is) the production of ever-higher unities.

Though I do not know Wilber's book and I do not know John Rowan well, what resonates for me in this is the parallel between those ideas and the work of Ira Progoff which I have been following and practising for five years. Ira Progoff, not well known here, is a depth psychologist and former student of C.G. Jung who has invested most of his adult life in articulating a theory and developing a technique (the **Intensive Journal** method) which generates ever-higher unities and ultimately brings together the spiritual and the psychological. Discussing his last book he says that in providing a means of working "tangibly with the dimension of spiritual meaning in the specifics of our individual life history (it) fulfills the fundamental vision that was stated many years ago as the goal of Holistic Depth Psychology: To provide an integrative method by which the psychological and the spiritual can be experienced as two sides of a single coin".(2)

Progoff contrasts the **process** view of relating to our lives with a **static** view. In the static view we analyze ourselves and say "this is how I am". We get stuck in old perceptions. However:

An alternative way of approaching our lives . . . is to regard life as an ongoing, living process and to ask of it: "where is my life trying to go? What does my life desire to become? What does my life require of me?" (3)

A metaphor which Progoff uses to describe the process was given to him by C.G. Jung at their last meeting. Jung told Progoff that he should remember that to get from one peak to a higher one requires going through the valley between. At that time the advice meant nothing to Progoff. It was a peak time - book accepted for publication, return to America and interesting work. But a year and a half later when he was struggling with his next book, when he could not see his way, when he doubted his direction -then he understood more of peaks and valleys.

Within the process, then, are times of unity and stasis and times of struggle toward higher unities. The valleys have a variety of causes and represent various forms of change. Perhaps beliefs held in the past no longer explain the world. Perhaps a job that was fulfilling loses its flavour and becomes a bore. Perhaps a stable relationship begins to tilt.

For John Rowan the sense of his present discomfort included a sense of other periods of stability:

Ten years ago I was saying, with a smile, "everyone is neurotic". Three or four years ago I learned to say "Everyone is psychotic". That was more scary but it seemed to do justice to the preverbal realm, and I learned to accept it.

But now a new realm needs to be accommodated - the spiritual. It is very uncomfortable. "At times", he writes, "I felt like running away from the whole thing". He is experiencing what Jerome Bruner calls "the anguish of the inner voyage".

The peaks and valleys experience is a universal one. Not everyone has experienced that time when spirituality becomes the issue, but we have all experienced change. The **Intensive Journal** has been found to be helpful in periods of change regardless of the issue and regardless of the age or stage of development. It has been effective in both schools and universities, among priests and prisoners, and with those who are disturbed as well as with those whose lives are stable but who simply seek some further creativity or meaning. One group represents how effective it can be with unsophisticated people. In New York City the Journal was added to training being given to about 300 people on welfare. Many were from the Carribean and used English as a second language. The program was highly successful when compared with programs in which the Journal was not used, and some of the writing took on a blunt eloquence as deprived people got in touch with deep parts of themselves.

WHAT IS THE INTENSIVE JOURNAL?

In appearance Progoff's Journal is a loose-leaf notebook with 25 dividers in it. The dividers are grouped under four broad

headings. Using the Journal consists of learning the techniques associated with each division. (Learning is best done in a group at first. But many have taught themselves the techniques). These divisions are categories of the several aspects of our lives and of the way we experience time.

What distinguishes Progoff's Journal from other forms of journal writing is its sensitivity to the structure of complex life processes and the practicality of his methods of exploring and enhancing our lives, of evoking the growth process. Its major divisions are as follows: "The Life/Time Dimension" where chronological data is gathered. It includes three ways of working with our past. The "Depth Dimension" is for dreams and other spontaneous imaging experiences. The "Dialogue Dimension" contains exercises for deepening our relationships with other persons, our bodies, work, events, society. The "Process Meditation" section is the place for working with meaning and spirit. Progoff writes:

Each of the Journal sections (is) a channel for a particular inner process of personal life. Each section is used with specific active procedures that serve to evoke the contents of a person's life without analysis or diagnosis, but in such a way as to stimulate additional inner perceptions and movements of many kinds. The sections tend to cross-fertilize and activate one another, releasing new energies and bringing about new combinations of ideas and feelings. Even in short periods of use, the process carried by the **Intensive Journal** structure has a transforming and redirective effect upon a person's life. (4)

Each of the exercises involves, in one way or another, a mediation between our conscious, thinking selves, and our unconscious, intuiting selves. The world of conscious thought speaks in a language of words. The unconscious speaks in a variety of languages - feelings, hunches, dreams, images, stress, indeed our very health. Progoff's methods enable us to bring all these languages together by evoking the links between our conscious and unconscious selves.

FIRST EXPERIENCES WITH THE INTENSIVE JOURNAL

I first encountered the **Intensive Journal** method five years ago when I was writing something and hit a block. A colleague described an exercise called "Dialogue with Words". She had learned it from someone at a conference, hadn't tried it, but thought it sounded interesting. The steps she gave me, written on a file card, seemed a bit odd. But with an impending deadline, I was open to anything.

It worked. What happened was not miraculous, but the writing block melted, and I decided I wanted to learn more about Progoff. I had been keeping a journal for more than twenty years, but I had never had that kind of dialogue experience. So I bought one of his books, some of his taped lectures, and signed up for a workshop.

At the workshop we participants experienced several other dialogues - with the body, society, other persons, with inner wisdom. In that workshop, called "Life Context", we worked with our past and projected into the future. After the workshop, I began a dream log and from the basic book learned a non-analytical way of working with them.

The workshop expanded my knowledge of the method. It is not merely a problem-solving technique to apply to specific problems. Rather it is a comprehensive system for dealing with one's life in all its multiple dimensions. It is an intricately developed and highly sophisticated method for dealing with the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual domains of life.

In the "Life Context" workshop we learned and practised Journal techniques and in the practice built a perspective of our life. Later I enrolled in two further workshops which Progoff has formulated: "Depth Feedback/", in which there was much more practice with the use of imagery and with the feedback processes (the way in which the parts of the Journal feedback not only to the Journal writer but interplay with each other). In "Process Meditation" we practised those exercises which focus specifically on the meaning of life. Though they had no religious content,

these exercises sometimes evoked experiences which were deeply spiritual. They tapped, in Progoff's phrase, "the depth beyond the dogma".

THE EXPERIENCES OF OTHERS

Because of the richness of my own experiences, I entered a training program which led to authorization as a workshop leader. As I began giving workshops and as I adapted the Journal to a class I teach, others began telling me of their Journal experiences or writing to me of them. These comments were all voluntary. What goes into the Journal is strictly private.

Many memories come to mind:

A woman in her early thirties who had been tormented by migraines throughout half of her life, told me half way through the course, that she had stopped having them.

A photographer conceived a whole photographic project. It came as a sequence of images in the middle of an exercise.

A young man wrote to me about depression that had distressed him for two years. "With the help of the Journal, I finally figured out what it was all about. The summer looks exceedingly bright".

A man at a prison where I gave a workshop wrote to me of his gratitude for the Journal. "I have two more years to work on my life, and now I have some tools for doing it".

Another prisoner who, in one of the exercises, came to realize for the first time how he got there.

A woman terribly twisted by a progressive disease of her joints and a series of surgeries dialogued with her body and discovered all it had taught her about courage and assertiveness.

A student at the end of the course wrote to me of the cumulative effect of the Journal:

I have become sensitive to stirrings and movements deep within myself that I either wasn't aware of before or ignored prior to my experience with the **Intensive Journal**. I can honestly say that I have felt a real inner growth these last few months, and I know my Journal is responsible for that. It has enabled me to strengthen the connection that my conscious mind has with my unconscious mind, and this new strength is being reflected in my whole being. I feel more "unified", more integrated with myself - as if all the elements of my entire being have somehow been brought closer together, put in touch with each other in a very healthy way.

IN CONCLUSION

In this brief space, I have tried to share something of the experience of the **Intensive Journal** and something of its value as I and others see it. In so doing I used as a handle a small and unrepresentative excerpt from John Rowan's article and ignored the spiritual map which is the more important part of the presentation. It was done in the spirit of dialogue and "dialogue is an indispensable part of **being in a universe where all is interrelated**". (12)

References

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3. Progoff, **The Practice of Process Meditation**, p. 42.
4. Progoff, **The Practice of Process Meditation**, p. 16.
5. Progoff, Ira. **At a Journal Workshop**. New York: Dialogue House Library, 1975, pp. 9-10.
6. Progoff, Ira. **Depth Psychology and Modern Man**, New York: McGraw-Hill paperback, 1973.

7. Progoff, Ira. **The Symbolic and the Real**. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963.
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9. Kaiser, Robert Blair. "The Way of the Journal," **Psychology Today**, Vol. 15, March 1981, p. 64.
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11. Huyghe, Patrick, "Diary Writing Turns a New Leaf", **New York Times Magazine**, November 8, 1981.
12. Larsen, Stephen. **The Shaman's Doorway**. New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1976, p. 169.

Those who would like to continue the dialogue with Progoff will find his books at Compendium, Dillon's, and Watkin's. The U.K. Distributor is Airlift Books. Those who would like the experience of a workshop should contact Damascus House in Mill Hill where workshops are scheduled for June and September.

Nice not to have known you

Hello
 Hello
 Oh! Is that you?
 No, it is not me
 I'm sorry to disappoint you
 but it is not me
 Are you often not you?
 No, I'm often not
 I have flashes of me
 but most of the time
 I'm not me
 Well, it is nice not to have known you

John Moore